

On September 9th, 2010 in a historic ruling, U.S. District Judge Virginia A. Philips declared that the U.S. military's ban on openly gay service members violates the Constitution, under both the 1st Amendment's free speech clause as well as the 14th Amendment's due process clause. I see this as a major triumph for LGBT individuals, and fully endorse the District Judge's ruling. Whenever anyone serves our country, regardless of their race, sex, socio-economic status, religion, or sexuality, we should honor their service, not force them to hide their identity in shame.

The court is not alone in addressing the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" military policy. I am a cosponsor of HR 1283, The Military Readiness Enhancement Act, which would repeal current Department of Defense (DOD) policy concerning homosexuality in the Armed Forces, prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation against any member of the Armed Forces or any person seeking to become a member. The bill also authorizes the re-accession into the Armed Forces of otherwise qualified individuals previously separated for homosexuality, bisexuality, or homosexual conduct.

The House included a repeal of Don't Ask Don't Tell in its version of the Fiscal Year 2011 National Defense Authorization Act, but unfortunately, the Senate version of the Bill, S.3454, failed a vote last week. I find it unacceptable that such systemized discrimination has been allowed to go on for so long, and it is troubling to me that there are those in the Senate who continue to advocate this position despite the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and several military officials testifying that it runs against the interests of a cohesive military. I am hopeful, however, that after wise and thoughtful deliberation, the Senate will reconsider and pass the Defense Authorization Bill in full, including the component that guarantees the civil rights of those LGBT individuals who serve in our armed forces.

As your Congressman, I have ardently supported legislation that advances the rights of LGBT individuals, and I will continue to do so in the future. It is my hope that, in conjunction with the Senate as well as the leadership of the current president, the Don't Ask Don't Tell Policy will soon to be repealed in full.